

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SSM-03
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R 021411Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5095
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1515

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS, EG, JO, PFOR
SUBJECT: GAZA CITY MANAGER ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

REF: TEL AVIV 162

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO GAZA CITY MANAGER ISAM SHAWWA, PRESIDENT SADAT HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST, THROUGH HIS AMBASSADOR IN AMMAN, IN SEEING MAYOR SHAWWA. THE ISRAELIS HAVE AGREED "IN PRINCIPLE" THAT GAZA MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD, BUT HAVE NOT SPECIFIED WHEN. MAYOR SHAWWA HAS ALLEGEDLY OBTAINED ARAFAT'S AGREEMENT NOT TO SUPPORT GAZA EXTREMISTS IN EVENTUAL ELECTIONS, AND ISAM SHAWWA IS CONFIDENT THAT HIS UNCLE WILL WIN. END SUMMARY.

2. GAZA CITY MANAGER ISAM SHAWWA (NEPHEW TO THE
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MAYOR) TOLD EMBOFFS MARCH 1 THAT DURING MAYOR SHAWWA'S RECENT VISIT TO AMMAN (TO OFFER CONDOLENCES ON THE QUEEN'S DEATH, SEE FBIS-JN 171424Y) THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR HAD CALLED ON HIM WITH THE MESSAGE THAT PRESIDENT SADAT WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM. THE MAYOR ANSWERED THAT HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO VISIT CAIRO, PROVIDED HE RECEIVED AN INVITATION IN WRITING

AND THE AMBASSADOR WOULD COME TOO, TO WHICH THE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT HE THOUGHT THIS COULD BE ARRANGED. THE MAYOR THEN SAID HE WAS ONLY JOKING ABOUT THE WRITTEN INVITATION, HE WOULD TAKE THE AMBASSADOR'S WORD FOR IT. SEVERAL DAYS AGO, ALSO ACCORDING TO SHAWWA, THE MAYOR RECEIVED A FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE FROM THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR (IN AMMAN) TO THE EFFECT THAT "WE ARE WAITING FOR A SIGNAL FROM YOU SO THAT WE CAN SEND YOU AN INVITATION." TO EMBOFF'S QUESTION WHETHER THE INVITATION IS SITTING ON THE BURNER, SHAWWA REMARKED THAT IT WAS, BUT GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE MAYOR WOULD IN ALL PROBABILITY ACCEPT IT BEFORE TOO LONG.

3. THE MAYOR HAS IN HAND ISRAELI AGREEMENT "IN PRINCIPLE" THAT MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS FOR GAZA WILL BE HELD, SHAWWA TOLD EMBOFFS, BUT THE TIMING IS UP IN THE AIR. HE BELIEVES THAT THE MAYOR AND PRESENT COUNCIL WILL STAY IN OFFICE BEYOND THEIR SELF-IMPOSED DEADLINE OF MARCH 31 (SEE TEL AVIV 162); HANDBILLS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO GENERATE SUPPORT AND THE MAYOR EXPECTS TO RECEIVE EIGHT TO TEN THOUSAND REQUESTS TO REMAIN IN OFFICE. IN CONNECTION WITH THE ELECTIONS, SHAWWA SAID THE GAZA LEFTISTS ARE HURT BY THE SUDDEN DEATH TEN DAYS AGO OF THEIR SPIRITUAL AND FINANCIAL LEADER. THIS BLOW CAME AFTER PRESIDENT SADAT HAD ALLEGEDLY TOLD A VISITING GAZA DELEGATION OF PLO SYMPATHIZERS IN JANUARY (SEE CAIRO 112) "WE BACK YOU ONE HUNDRED PERCENT, WE ARE FOR A PALESTINIAN

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STATE, BUT IF YOU WANT TO MAKE PROGRESS, WHY DON'T YOU GO TALK TO KING HUSSEIN?" THE MAYOR HAS SINCE SENT AN EMISSARY TO ARAFAT, ADVISING HIM TO WITHHOLD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE GAZA EXTREMISTS IN THE ELECTION STRUGGLE. ARAFAT AGREED, ACCORDING TO SHAWWA, AND PLO SUPPOSEDLY WILL NOT COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE LEFTISTS WHEN ELECTIONS ARE EVENTUALLY HELD.

4. DEFENSE MINISTER PERES REPORTEDLY TOLD MAYOR SHAWWA THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO HIS REQUEST FOR MORE GOI MONEY FOR THE MUNICIPALITY. ALSO ON THE FINANCIAL SIDE, THE MAYOR STILL INTENDS AT THIS POINT TO MAKE A FUND RAISING TRIP TO ABU DHABI IN MARCH OR APRIL (REFTEL).

5. THE MFA'S REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE TERRITORIES (GONNEN) VERIFIED FOR US MARCH 2 THAT PERES HAD GIVEN A FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO THE

REQUEST FOR GAZA ELECTIONS, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT CONSIDERABLE STUDY, TIME, AND PREPARATIONS WOULD BE REQUIRED BEFORE ANY SUCH ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD. HE DID NOT MENTION HOW MUCH TIME MIGHT ELAPSE, BUT ISAM SHAWWA CLAIMED HE HAS HEARD THE ISRAELIS TALKING ABOUT A DELAY OF TWELVE MONTHS.

6. ISAM SHAWWA WAS MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HIS UNCLE'S ELECTORAL CHANCES THAN WHEN WE LAST TALKED TO HIM ON THE SUBJECT. PREVIOUSLY HE TOLD US THAT HIS UNCLE WOULD HAVE "GOOD CHANCES" AMONG A RESTRICTED GROUP OF VOTERS DEFINED UNDER OLD MANDATE LAWS. NOW HE BELIEVES THAT IF ELECTIONS ARE HELD UNDER THE OLD LAWS, HIS UNCLE WILL WIN, "ONE HUNDRED PERCENT CERTAIN." EVEN IF THE LAWS ARE REVISED TO INCLUDE ALL GAZA CITY RESIDENTS (INCLUDING FEMALES AND NON-TAXPAYING REFUGEES), HIS UNCLE WILL STILL
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WIN, "EIGHTY PERCENT" SURE.

7. COMMENT: THE STORY OF MAYOR SHAWWA'S POSSIBLE INVITATION TO SEE PRESIDENT SADAT IS SURPRISING, AND THE PURPORTED ARAFAT ACQUIESCENCE IN STAYING OUT OF EVENTUAL GAZA ELECTIONS EVEN MORE SURPRISING. WE WOULD GUESS THAT THE SHAWWAS ARE MAKING POLITICAL HAY AMONG GAZANS AND OTHER ARABS AS WELL BY JUDICIOUS RE-TELLING OF BOTH STORIES. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY REACTIONS FROM ADDRESSEES ON THESE POINTS.

8. LATELY, MUCH OF THE STING MUST HAVE DISSIPATED FROM THE CHARGE BRUIED ABOUT BY MAYOR SHAWWA'S WEST BANK PRO-PLO COUNTERPARTS THAT HE "IS ONLY AN APPOINTED MAYOR"--A CHARGE CITED TO US BY THE MAYOR AS THE REASON BEHIND HIS CALL FOR GAZA ELECTIONS IN THE FIRST PLACE. THIS ANTI-SHAWWA SLOGAN IS COMMONLY USED AS A DEMOCRATIC-SOUNDING SUBSTITUTE FOR ANOTHER, VIZ., THAT HE IS A LACKEY OF THE JORDANIANS (AND/OR THE ISRAELIS). IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT EVENTS, HOWEVER, THE EASY CRITICISMS OF SHAWWA'S WEST BANK COLLEAGUES ABOUT HIS PRO-JORDANIAN SYMPATHIES ARE UNDERCUT BY EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT'S CALL FOR JORDAN-PLO CONFEDERATION EVEN BEFORE GENEVA, AND MORESO BY THE PUBLICIZED RENEWAL OF MEETINGS BETWEEN THE PLO AND JORDAN. FOR IF THE ARABS AND THE PLO RECOGNIZE THAT KING HUSSEIN IS BACK IN THE GAME, HOW CAN SHAWWA'S CRITICS WOUND HIM BY CALLING HIM PRO-JORDANIAN?
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